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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Department of English Bible

OT (EB) 735 Jeremiah
3 Hours

Spring, 2001
Instructor: Lawson G. Stone

I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course studies the book of Jeremiah as a whole and its most significant parts, with special attention to the composition and preservation of the prophetic book and the historical and theological context of the prophet's ministry. Emphasis is placed on hermeneutical principles bearing on the interpretation of prophetic literature as encountered in this book and its treatment within the Bible as a whole.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. **Methodology.** Emphasis will be on observing and interpreting books as wholes. By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:
1. **Observation:** Survey books as wholes, survey various units and sub-units within a book, observe details of strategic paragraphs and verses, ask key interpretive questions regarding observations.
 2. **Interpretation:** Answer the most significant questions raised in the observation processes; integrate the answers to the questions in a progressive fashion so as to achieve a coherent understanding of the unit studied.
 3. **Evaluation and Application:** Place truths in the flow of biblical revelation so as to evaluate their applicability to other times and places; identify contemporary situations appropriately addressed by the biblical message; make the applications.
 4. **Correlation:** relate the theology of the book to the teaching of other biblical materials, thus moving toward a biblical theology.
- B. **Content.** The student shall be able to:
1. Think through the contents of the book of Jeremiah without recourse to the printed text;
 2. Identify significant passages in Jeremiah and interpret them contextually;
 3. Demonstrate the importance of sound methodology for interpretation, including specific examples from this book;
 4. Delineate the development of major themes of the book of Jeremiah and their significance, citing individual passages and other specific data to support conclusions;
 5. Discuss the historical and religious background of Jeremiah, demonstrating a general knowledge of critical problems regarding the book, especially as may be derived inductively at the level of inquiry conducted in this course; also demonstrate ability to use this data in the interpretation of this book.
- C. **Attitude:** We hope the student will:

1. Appreciate the value of sound methodology for the interpretation of the Bible, resulting in a desire to study other books methodically;
2. Desire to make the book of Jeremiah the object of passionate study and reflection throughout life;
3. Intend to use Jeremiah seriously in spiritual growth, pastoral care, and preaching.

III. COURSE MATERIALS

A. Required Texts:

1. A modern, standard (non-paraphrasing) translation of the Bible with minimal editorial clutter in the layout. The *Revised Standard Version*, *New Revised Standard Version* or *NASB* are recommended, and inexpensive text editions are available in the bookstore;
2. *Methodical Bible Study*, Robert A. Traina.
3. Phillip King, *Jeremiah: An Archeological Companion*
4. J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*. NICOT. Eerdmans.

B. Supplemental Material

Periodically additional material may be assigned. Students wishing to pursue further study will find a bibliography attached.

C. Specialized Research and Bibliographic Review

Students may elect to replace up to 6 hours of the regularly assigned lessons with specialized research of their own choosing. This may fall in three areas:

1. Further reading in Jeremiah Studies
2. Issues in the interpretation of prophecy
3. Further research on a selected interpretative issue

IV. COURSE PROCEDURES

A. Inductive Studies of Jeremiah

The most important part of the course is the student's own, independent, direct study of Jeremiah, due at class time on the dates assigned.

"Independent" means that lessons are the notes of the student's own direct study of the Bible, with reference to secondary sources only as appropriate—to minimally interpretive works during the course of study and to more interpretive works only after considerable study of one's own. Then the student will be expected to give evidence of critical interaction with interpretive literature used. When secondary sources are used, clear documentation will appear.

Independent excludes reference to any previous student's work in the course and to lecture notes from any previous semester of this class or any other class. It is assumed that these notes and all work submitted for this course is the student's own work, done specifically for this class and not previously submitted as part of any other course's requirements. Exceptions to these procedures will be clearly announced.

Thoroughness, accuracy, and the ability to penetrate beyond the superficial understanding of the text will be sought. See below for criteria of excellence.

B. Format

Lessons must be legibly written and clearly labeled with name, lesson number, due date, and time spent on the lesson. All pages submitted must be stapled or paper-clipped together.

C. Evaluation and Feedback

1. Lessons. All lessons are to be finished by the due date and turned in for evaluation. They will be returned for class sessions.
2. Classroom instruction and interaction. The student's main source of information for self-evaluation will be the class sessions. By comparing their work with the method and content of the instruction and by asking questions and participating in class dialogue, they should be able to identify points of weakness and strength.

D. Grade Components

About 6 lessons will be graded, in addition to the final lesson. Grades given on lessons reviewed will be equal value in computing the semester grade, with the exception of the final lesson which will count as a double lesson.

Work submitted late will not be accepted except in case of emergency or by previous arrangement with the instructor.

E. Criteria for Excellence

1. Induction. Base conclusions on the concrete evidence of the text. Reason inferentially.
2. Accuracy. Draw valid inferences from the text, give references.
3. Originality. Take a fresh approach to the material, using your own words and finding new ways of expressing biblical truth.
4. Depth. Probe beneath the surface of the text to find those truths which are not self-evident.
5. Organization. Systematize your findings so as to correlate similar ones and so as to indicate logical progression, relative importance and the intended interrelation of your ideas.
6. Relative Thoroughness. Be as complete as possible within the time limits.
7. Clarity. Try to express your thoughts in an unambiguous way.

F. Course Requirements

1. Completion and submission of assignments in writing.
2. Punctual attendance and eager, productive participation in class dialogue can lead to an elevation of the final grade by one degree, i.e. B+>A-. The opposite applies as well.
3. Responsible handling of difficulty with class content or requirements, of late work, of absences, or other matters related to the class.

Inductive Studies in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah**1A. SURVEY of the BOOK AS A WHOLE-Materials DUE: Feb. 20****A. Initial Overview-**

1. Give brief titles to each chapter and cluster of chapters of the book.
2. Remember to keep titles descriptive, suggestive, and brief.
3. Use a chart to record your titles, leaving space for other data as you gather it

B. Identify Various Types of Materials

1. As you are able, note the following types of material and where they occur:
 - a. Poetry and prose
 - b. Narrative, speeches, prayers
 - c. 1st person (prophet's) and 3rd Person speech
 - d. Superscriptions (headings)
 - e. Chronological references
 - f. Persons, Groups and places named
2. Try to determine the natural groupings of blocks of material based on the observations above. As much as possible, establish divisions based on *empirical observations of formal features of the text* and not on hunches or impressions about deeper structural relationships.

1B. SURVEY of the BOOK...Structure and Other Data DUE: Feb. 22**A. Structure**

1. Observe the **structural relationships** operative between and through the major units of the book. Describe the **specific materials** involved in each structure, so that the meaning of what you have observed structurally is clear.
2. Ask the **standard interpretive questions**, adapted to these specific materials and focused on major structural relationships and the materials so structured.

B. Strategic Areas: give reasons for each area chosen as strategic**C. Higher Critical Data** should be noted. This includes specifically material pointing to the *concrete circumstances of the prophet*, his *audience*, and the *formation of the book*.**D. Note other impressions/questions** relating to the book.**2. Jeremiah 1:1-3 Historical Background DUE: Feb. 27**

1. Carefully analyze this brief paragraph's structure and content.
2. Note every proper name, place or person, in the paragraph.
3. Read Thompson's introduction to the book of Jeremiah.
4. Read King, Preface and chs. 1-2.
5. Identify what you would consider the most significant factors in Jeremiah's era that would have shaped his ministry, and which should guide our interpretation.

3. Jeremiah 1:4-19 Segment Survey DUE: Mar. 1

1. Apply the suggestions in "Inductive Studies in the Old Testament" (ISOT) "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.

2. Trace in as much detail as you have time for *precisely how this segment prepares the reader for the rest of the book*.
3. What theological issues are raised by this segment? What does it reveal about God, his way with the nations, his way with his servants, and the human response?

4. Jeremiah 2:1-4:4

DUE: Mar 6

1. Apply the suggestions in “Inductive Studies in the Old Testament” (ISOT) “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
2. The following are some “hints” designed to help you get at key aspects of the material, not a substitute for the standard segment survey process:
 - a. Make a list of every *image* or *figure of speech* used in this passage.
 - b. Note the change of speaker among Yahweh, Jeremiah, and the people
 - c. Comparing several versions, note the shifts between poetry and prose
 - d. Note formulas like “thus says the Lord” and the like.

OMIT 5. Jer. 4:3-4 Detailed Observation

DUE:

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT “Studying a Selected Passage, I and II” to this passage.
2. For I “Bases of Selection,” what considerations might lead to selecting this passage for focused study?
3. Follow the procedure in II for this passage

OMIT 6. Jer. 4:3-4 Interpretation

DUE:

1. Use ISOT “Studying a Selected Passage III: Suggested Procedure for Interpretation” to interpret “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, remove the foreskin of your hearts.”
2. The following determinants of interpretation will probably prove most useful: context, scriptural testimony, word usage.
3. Summarize your findings, however meager! *Without some form of summary, you have not done interpretation; only research.*

7. Jer. 4:5-6:30 Segment Survey

DUE: Mar 8

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT “Survey of Units as Wholes” to this passage.
2. Note: the following are *hints* to help you, not requirements:
 - a. Do the individual units flow together smoothly?
 - b. Trace the shifting voice. Who is speaking in each unit? Where are they? What do they see?
 - c. Note the use of formulas to demarcate unit divisions.
 - d. Note references to the coming “evil from the north.”
 - e. How does the inspection tour of 5:1ff flow from the sounding of the alarm through 4:5-30?
 - f. What accounts for the abrupt transition from 5:31 to 6:1?
 - g. What is said about the character of Judah in 4:5-6:30?

- h. Trace in the depiction of the prophet's *self-awareness*. What role does it play in the message? Compare with 1:4-19; set up a separate place to keep notes on this theme.

8. Jeremiah 7:1-8:3

DUE: Mar. 13

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
 - a. How is this passage different from what we have seen in 1:4-6:30? Organize differences in terms of style, content emphasis, terminology, presentation, assumption of the possibility of salvation, etc.
 - b. Trace the alternation between messages intended for *Judah* and those aimed at *Jeremiah*.
 - c. How far does the actual "Temple Sermon" reach? What is the segment *as a whole* doing with this material?
 - d. Keep tracking the self-awareness of the prophet.
2. What are the characteristics of a religion which God wants to destroy? Can you rewrite this sermon for First Methodist Church, County Seat, Texas? How about as a message to dedicate a new building???? How badly do you want to be run out of town?

9. Jeremiah 8:4-9:26

DUE: Mar. 20

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. Note the concluding emphases in 9:23-26; what claims to spiritual and theological distinctives does Judah express in 8:4-9:22?
3. What are some contemporary claims to special religious or theological status? How do Jeremiah's words apply (and not apply) to those?

Omit 10. Jer. 9:23-26: Detailed Observation

DUE:

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Studying a Selected Passage, I and II" to this passage.
2. For I "Bases of Selection," what considerations might lead to selecting this passage for focused study?
3. Follow the procedure in II for this passage

Omit 11. Jer. 9:23-6 Interpretation

DUE:

1. Use ISOT "Studying a Selected Passage III: Suggested Procedure for Interpretation" to answer the question, "What is the meaning of "uncircumcised of heart?"
2. Gives primacy to *context* to answer the question, dealing at least with the immediate context of 9:23-26 and 8:4-9:26, but also taking in the book of Jeremiah. Read a Bible Encyclopedia article on "Circumcision."
3. Summarize your findings, however meager! *Without some form of summary, you have not done interpretation; only research.*

12. Jeremiah 10:1-25

DUE: Mar 27

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. How does this passage fitly draw the whole discourse of 1:4-9:26 to a close?

3. Compare your translation with the Septuagint on the handout provided. Define as precisely as possible the divergences.
4. Read E. Tov, "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History," *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, J. Tigay, ed. 211-237.

13. Jeremiah 11-13

DUE: Mar 29

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
HINT: Trace the theme of *opposition to the word*.
2. Continue keeping notes on the first-person singular passages, and other passages which reflect directly on the phenomenon and experience of prophecy.
3. Read King, ch. 7.
4. Keep brief notes on passages you would like to study further, problems you encounter, and potential points of application.
- 5.

14. Jeremiah 14-17

DUE: Apr 3

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
HINT: Trace the *dialogue* bet. Jeremiah and God
2. Continue keeping notes on the first-person singular passages, and other passages which reflect directly on the phenomenon and experience of prophecy.
3. Read King, ch. 8.
4. Keep brief notes on passages you would like to study further, problems you encounter, and potential points of application.

15. Jeremiah 18-20

DUE: Apr.5

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
HINT: Trace the *pottery* motifs of this unit.
2. Continue keeping notes on the first-person singular passages, and other passages which reflect directly on the phenomenon and experience of prophecy.
3. Due to Time limitations, no further detailed study or commentary reading for this passage is assigned.
4. Keep brief notes on passages you would like to study further, problems you encounter, and potential points of application.
5. Read King, ch. 10

16. The "Confessions" of Jeremiah

DUE: Apr. 17

1. Gather together your notes dealing with the prophetic self-awareness. Consider the following questions:
 - a. What is the range of prophetic response to the reception and proclamation of God's word?
 - b. What is the connection between the passages in which the prophet speaks in his own voice, instead of as God's mouthpiece, and the contexts surrounding them?
 - c. Is there any progression through the book in the way the prophetic persona appears?

2. *Carefully* consider the following questions:
 - a. Do these passages, especially those coming in chaps. 11-20, enable us to construct a biography of Jeremiah?
 - b. What role do these first-person passages serve in the overall presentation of the prophet's ministry and message?
 - c. What might be said in defense of the claim that the "I" passages in Jeremiah are not autobiographical for the prophet, but rather are personifications of *communal* voices? It has been claimed, for example, that in these passages "we have no access to the privacy of Jeremiah's inner struggles, and that he always speaks the language and expresses the concerns of a public, cultic intercessor." (McKane, p. xcii, summarizing Reventlow).
3. What relationship(s) do you think might exist between the *expressions* of Jeremiah's suffering in chaps. 1-20 and the *accounts* of Jeremiah's suffering in chaps. 26-44, where he seems suprisingly sublime amidst unthinkable agony?
4. In a book emphasizing the prophet's messages, particularly messages of judgment, what role(s) are served by the emphasis on the prophet's *suffering*?
5. Read G. Von Rad, "The Confessions of Jeremiah," *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, 339-347.
6. How might these passages affect your experience of and ministry during Holy Week?

"He was a projectile, fired upon a hostile world with a force not his own, and on a mission from which, from the first, his gifts and affections recoiled and against which he continued to protest...he reminds us of one of those fatal shells which rend the air as they shoot, distinct even through the roar of battle by their swift, shrill anguish and effecting their end by their explosion. ...not weeping...so much as groaning or even screaming is the particular pitch of the tone of this prophet. He makes us feel that he has been charged against his will and he hurtles on his career like one slung at a target who knows that in fulfilling his commission he shall be broken—as indeed he was."

—George Adam Smith, *Jeremiah*, 317-318.

17. Jeremiah 21-25

DUE: Apr 19

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. Note specific *groups* spoken to/of in this section.
3. Note the superscription in 25:1f. Note the significance of the "4th year of Jehoiachin" according to this passage. Why, at the end of this first major unit, pass *back* in time to this year?
4. Keep brief notes on passages you would like to study further, problems you encounter, and potential points of application.
5. *Food for Thought*: in the alternative arrangement of Jeremiah represented by the LXX, 25:1-13 was followed by 49:34-39; 46:2-28; 50; 51; 47; 49:7-22; 49:1-6; 49:28-33; 49:23-27; 48; then resumes at 25:15 (25:14 is omitted in LXX). In our present arrangement, two passages (25:1-13, 15-38) which were before widely separated as a "bracket" around the oracles against the nations now stand side by side and far from the very material it used to provide context for. Without trying to do redaction criticism, you could your analysis by contrasting the present literary shape of 25 with the LXX alternative order.

18. Jeremiah 26-29

DUE: Apr 24

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. Consider the issue of true and false prophecy in Jer 28. Below are some *suggestions* to pursue.
 - a. Characterize Jeremiah's response to Hananiah's prophecy in 28:5-11
 - b. How certain was Jeremiah of the destruction of the city in chapters 26-27?
 - c. How do you account for Jeremiah's attitude in 28 in the light of 26-27?
 - d. What signs might the original hearers of the exchange between Jeremiah and Hananiah have had that would have identified Hananiah as a false prophet? Would Deut. 13:1-5 and 18:15-22 be applicable?
 - e. How does 28 authenticate the career of Jeremiah to the *reader*? What are the differences between the position and concerns of a reader and those of the original audience?
3. Compile from this section some principles regarding the nature of true hope

19. Jeremiah 30-33

DUE: Apr 26

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. Note specific *groups* spoken to/of in this section.
3. Due to Time limitations, no further detailed study or commentary reading for this passage is assigned.

20. Jeremiah 31:31-34

DUE: May 1

1. Analyze the paragraph structure and ask pertinent questions
2. What are the *precise elements* of the new covenant? Discover the meaning of each *solely* from content and context. Try to be comprehensive, precise, analytical.
3. What makes the new covenant new? Cf. Deut. 6:6, 11:18, 30:5-6, 14, Ezek. 36:22-32. Using the Index of OT Quotations found in the Greek NT, check a few uses of this passage in the NT.
4. Read Thompson, 577-585.
5. From your study, what is "New Covenant" religion?

Another Voice...

"If every an institution was created which was a complete failure from the beginning, it must be the deuteronomistic covenant! Yet here...the redactors are proposing yet another covenant, a new one. What a triumph of hope over experience! It is a good example of a certain kind of ideological thinking which, when in trouble, retreats to advocating the principle: 'If something has failed, what is required for its success is more of the same.'...to encounter a passage in a prophetic book which promises a golden future and a new covenant without repentance, and which envisages a period when there will be no need for such moral change *by* the people because Yahweh will change them automatically, is to enter a world where the prophets have conceded defeat and have withdrawn from the moral struggle to persuade people to change there ways....It is in this sense tha the motif of the new covenant is a counsel of despair *if* it is to be attributed to Jeremiah..."

—R. P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, 219-221

21. Jeremiah 34-36

DUE: May 3

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. Pay special attention to chapter 36 in the flow of chaps. 26-36, Briefly considering the role of *writing* in Jermiah's ministry
 - a. At what point do his oracles assume written form? (Cf. also 25:1-14.
 - b. What triggers the move to writing?

- c. What effect does this story have on the *reader* of the present *book* of Jeremiah?
3. Read King, ch. 6

22. Jeremiah 37-45

DUE: May 8

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. What is the relationship of this unit to what precedes?
3. How does the presentation of Jeremiah's message and experiences differ from 1-25 and 26-36?
4. Why does the writer return in chap. 45 to "the fourth year of Jehoiachim"? Why conclude the unit with a word to Baruch?
5. What connections does chap. 45 have with the rest of the book? (Note: recurring expressions like "your life as booty" or "pluck up and tear down" etc. can help).
6. Read W. Zimmerli, "The Fruit of the Tribulation of the Prophet," *Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, 349-365.
7. *Note:* In the arrangement of Jeremiah represented by the order of the LXX, chap. 45 concludes the oracles of Jeremiah. You could sharpen your understanding of the structure of the MT/ET by contrasting its order with the literary effect of the LXX order.

23. Jeremiah 46-51

DUE: May 10

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage. Note the use of superscriptions and repeated passages: 49:19-21=50:44-46; 49:18=50:40; [48:40b, 41b]= 49:22
2. What links are there between this section and the rest of the book. Consider: 46:27-28=[30:10-11]; 50:41-43=6:22-24; 51:15-19=10:12-16. (Passages in [] are not in the LXX version).
3. Use the concordance of parallel passages between the LXX and MT to plot the differences with the LXX order. What specific effects does the MT placement of the OAN at the end have on the sequential ordering of the book?
 - a. What structural connections between 1-25 and 26-45 would be broken if the OAN fell in the middle of 25?
 - b. What emphases of ch. 1 are reinforced by the placement of OAN at the end?
 - c. What is the effect of placing the messages after Jeremiah's abduction to Egypt?
4. As you have time, try to develop some sense of the effect of the MT/ET's different *internal order* of the OAN as contrasted with that of the LXX. Does the MT/ET order suggest a different point?
5. Read King, ch. 3

Omit 24. Jeremiah 52

DUE:

1. Apply the suggestions in ISOT "Survey of Units as Wholes" to this passage.
2. What is the structural function of this chapter for the book as a whole? Specifically, why return to the events of 597-582 BC?

3. Note the parallel with II Kings 24:18-25:30. What is the significance of ending the book with material drawn from elsewhere in the canon? Note also that Isaiah 36-39 duplicates II Kings 18:13-20:19 (minus II Kings 18:14-16).

25. Final Assignment (8 Hours)

DUE: Thursday, May 17, 8:00-10:00 AM

Please use your time so as to give attention to each of the following:

1. Synthesize your study of Jeremiah by doing *one* of the following:
 - a. Produce a synthetic master chart of the book coordinating as much of its structure and movement as possible. Polish this project as a presentation-quality product.
 - b. Develop a thematic/theological chart of the book as a whole in which interpretive conclusions are coordinated.
 - c. Select a *major* law of structure controlling the book as a whole and answer the survey questions about that law as fully as possible within the time limits.
 - d. Select a strategic area in the book and interpret it as fully as possible in the context of the book as a whole
2. Theological Evaluation: Read Gerhard Von Rad, "Jeremiah," in *The Message of the Prophets*, 161-188. The identical discussion appears in Von Rad's *Old Testament Theology*, II: 191-219. In the light of your study, evaluate von Rad's analysis of the theological significance of Jeremiah.
3. What can the book of Jeremiah say to the church of our day?